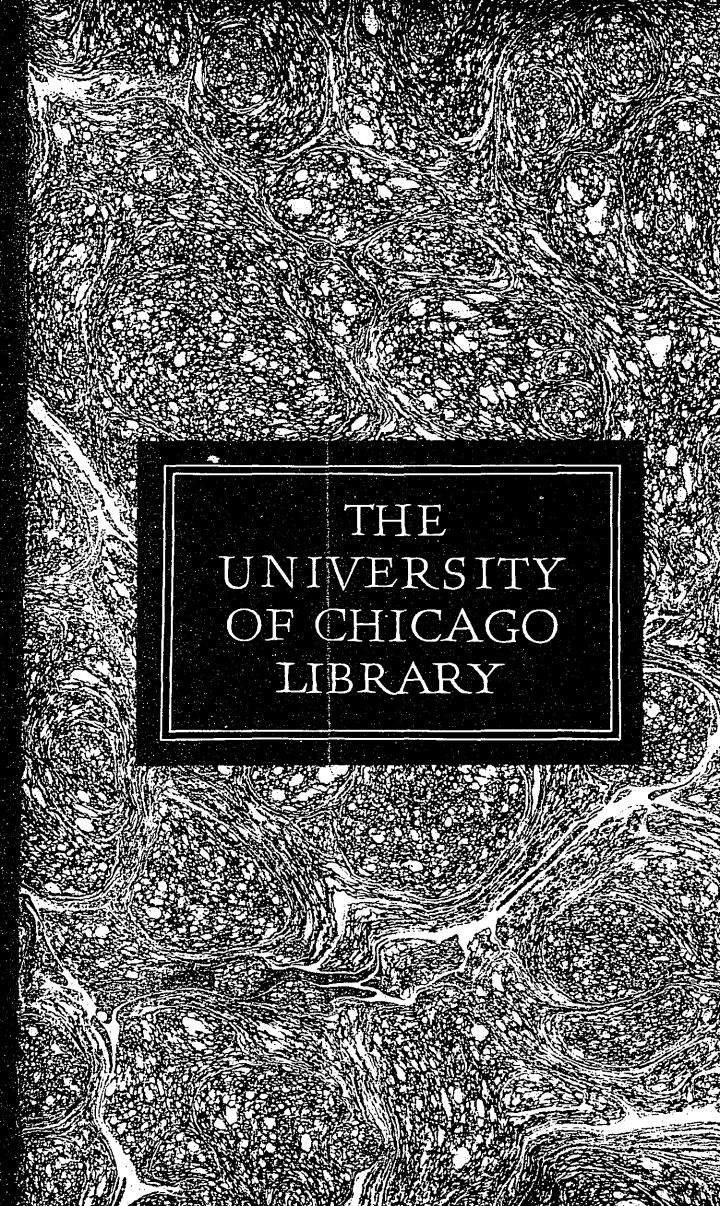
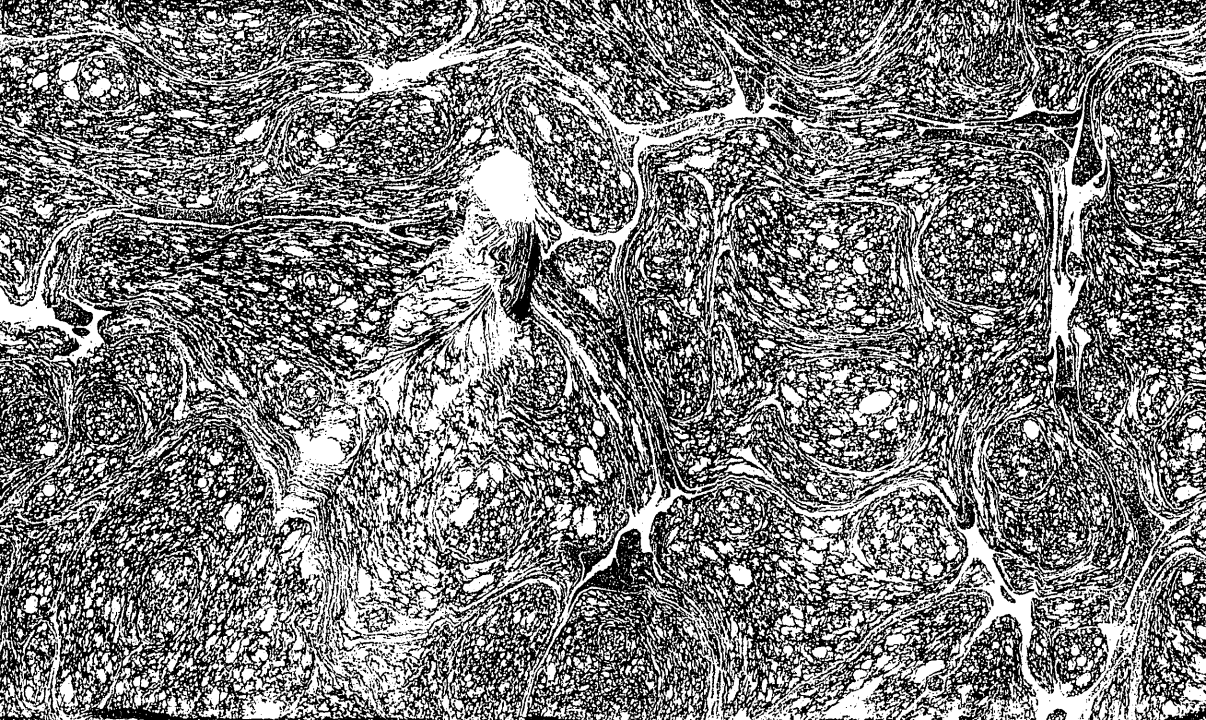
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LANGHAM, MARRIANNE

REFLECTIONS

ON

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Reflections were found amongst the papers of a Lady, lately deceased; and from the conviction which is entertained of the satisfaction, and, perhaps, improvement, which many surviving friends will derive from the perusal of them, a few copies have been printed, and are offered to them as a memorial of those virtues which they well knew how to appreciate. No attempt at correction has been made, as they will be consigned to those, who will only attach importance to the humility, resignation, and Christian piety, which pervade the whole, and which uniformly influenced her conduct through life.

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REFLECTIONS

ON

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EARLY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

THE present mode of early education differs so much from that adopted in former times with regard to religious impressions, that scarcely any thing but a total change in human nature can justify it: but when we are convinced from every day's experience, that the heart of man is the same, the passions as strong, requiring as much religious and moral disci-

pline, as in past times; how can we justify it to our God, ourselves, and children, when we keep from their knowledge those truths which can alone secure their happiness in this world, and in that which is to come; or postpone their acquaintance with divine principles, till others are so substituted, that the child finds he acts, apparently, as well without Religion, as with it; and reluctantly receives, or totally rejects, what should be the main spring of all his actions?

The corruption of man seems now so much put out of sight, that the very contrary is virtually believed, when we let children follow Nature, and dread nothing so much for them as a dereliction from natural habits, which our Religion expressly

says we must conquer, when they militate against it. Far be it from me to establish too much restraint (the parent of artifice) in any system of education: but the Bible will tend as much to a child's happiness, as to his well-being; and, if understood, will give him that self-restraint, which neither parent, nor master, unaided by Inspiration, can possibly impart.

The neglect of religious instruction, from what I have observed, originates in the dread of children's acquiring sound without sense, and of being familiar with words, without comprehending them. There is so much reason in this, that it cannot be opposed; and should therefore cause the parents, or instructor, to be doubly vigilant in seizing the time when the soil is

fit for the seed, and not let any opportunity be neglected, that can impress the tender mind with religious improvement. The love of GOD should operate more than the fear of Him; and every part of Christianity be so explained, the promises and threats so brought forward in aid of each other, that neither despondency, nor carelessness, could be the issue.

I have heard it remarked, that CHRIST'S precepts were formed for adults, and not for children; which induces some tender and very anxious parents, to endeavour to adapt parts of the Scriptures to the comprehension of their very young children, by abridging them: but infinite care should be taken, and great caution preserved in the performance, as there is dan-

ger of weakening the efficacy of the Bible, and keeping from children information which they are earlier capable of receiving than is imagined; and as they are less perplexed and diverted by various objects, than at a subsequent period of life, they are the more fit for those principles which will, and will alone, preserve them from, or deliver them out of, the troubles of this life, and secure them an inheritance in a far better state of existence.

May those parents who have a real and tender affection for the persons of their offspring, extend it to their souls, and be as much afraid of sin, as of sickness in their young families! May they not be infatuated by the idea of *innocence* in children, which is certainly but com-

parative; and remember that they have to deal with fallen man, whose corruptions are daily establishing themselves, if not exterminated, or restrained by Christianity.

What children are most in the habit of hearing in the incomparable Liturgy of our Church, should be particularly explained to them, that they may attach the proper importance to such valuable productions: and then, whether their education be pursued at home, or at school; whether, unfortunately, under the inspection of negligent teachers, as to Religion, or guided by people of a better cast; they will have a good chance of maintaining their first principles.

The Church-Catechism should be duly

explained, and the necessity of adhering to that part of it which enforces our duty to GOD and our neighbour, fully pointed out as the surest guide to moral and religious conduct: also our blessed SAVIOUR'S Sermon upon the Mount; as that is capable of repressing all the mischief arising from a corrupt education, and serves as a particular antidote against those false pleasures, solicitudes, tempers, and opinions, so ruinous to youth. That spirit, and those motives which are therein so admirably inculcated, must strike the young as very contrary to the system established (I will not say, by the world at large, but) by people in the world, who act from very slight, if any, perceptions of Religion; and who can scarcely under-

stand, that CHRIST's doctrine is to be the pervading spring of all our thoughts, words, and actions; and should be called into exercise upon every occasion, whether acting a public, or a private part in life; whether in a superior, or a subordinate situation; whether in sickness, or health; in prosperity, or adversity; in good or bad society; under kind or unkind treatment: and that our SAVIOUR's precepts and example will secure our peace in this world, and, through his interposition, our never-failing happiness in the next.

A TOO MINUTE ATTENTION TO DOCTRINAL POINTS TO BE AVOIDED.

I AM inclined to think that a too great attention to doctrinal points is very prejudicial to true Religion; as it diverts the mind from its duties, and engrosses that time which may be better spent in learning the will of GOD, and in obeying it. What is unessential to the salvation of the soul, may perhaps be allowed to take its course in the heart; and every thing must be unessential, that is not clearly and decidedly pointed out to us by GOD and CHRIST: we cannot mistake in this. We

are not commanded to follow the Apostles, though we may happen to think as they did, and to receive Christianity as they received it. Our task is surely sufficient, if we watch against every deviation from GOD'S word and will, without entering into fruitless discussions, and unavailing arguments, which only tend to separate the friends of GOD, and render them formidable to each other. A disposition to love the real friends of GOD, of whatever sect they be, provided Christianity is adhered to, must be more pleasing to our merciful FATHER, than a tenacious support of our own opinions.

When ungodly men observe that the Religious are disunited, it must weaken the little faith they have, and they will be apt

to exclaim, "Where is the certainty of "Religion? Every man has his own opi- "nion; why may we not have ours?" But the appearance is the least of the mischief; the human mind can go but to certain lengths, and can be occupied but by a certain number of ideas; and as we are accountable to GOD for our thoughts, how much it behoves us not to waste them upon any opinion that does not interfere with our eternal interest! Let us excuse what we deem an error in the opinions of our fellow-creatures, and not attempt to combat it, unless it is likely to prove prejudicial to them.

A system of religious opinions may be more complete, and adhered to more consistently, when unmixed with any other,

than when mutilated and weakened by perplexing though unimportant doubts. The great business of our Salvation is surely sufficient to occupy us: and "so "to pass through things temporal, as not "finally to lose the things that are eter-"nal," is a great work, without any addition produced by needless enquiries.

ON FILIAL DUTY.

FILIAL duty and affection are so expressly commanded by GOD, that they cannot be too strongly cultivated; they are the guardians of youth, and enable the man in advanced age to repay the care he has experienced in his infancy.

Should the mind, in its natural state, be hard, and little inclined to affection, we cannot wonder that the love of Parents is slight and unproductive: but when Religion has once established its empire in the heart, the love of our fellow-creatures will, in general, increase, es-

pecially towards the authors of our being, who have a strong claim on us for every attention which may lessen the troubles of old-age, and smooth its passage to eternity. GOD will best teach children their duty in this, as well as in every other particular; they will know from Him what are wrong and what are right compliances; how much they are to concede, and when to follow their free agency, and give to their Parents, if they have no paramount ties, their entire obedience, when it does not oppose itself to their consciences, and the commands of their Heavenly FATHER.

NOMINAL CHRISTIANITY NEARLY ALLIED TO INFIDELITY.

ATHEISTS and Deists are regarded with aversion and mistrust; and, when professedly such, are never admitted into the friendship and confidence of those who think they fear GOD. But how many are there, of this last description, who would be extremely shocked at the appellation! How many acknowledge *a God,* yet slight his commands, and bow the knee to any idol, in preference to their MAKER! How many acknowledge CHRIST, and allow the great plan of Redemption prepared for

fallen man most suited to the circumstances and feelings of his existence; yet, in every instance, act, speak, and think, in direct opposition to their SAVIOUR'S precepts!

How much does it behove us, who are born in a Christian country, who enjoy the privileges of a Christian education, to endeavour to reap the fruits of it, and to consider that our condemnation will greatly be increased from the advantages we have neglected! Let us no longer trifle with the blessing of religious instruction, but anxiously attend to every means of improvement, and watch every opportunity of conforming to our blessed SAVIOUR'S will. May we strongly mark the boundary-line betwixt believers, and unbelievers; and be ready to

suspect that a great degree of infidelity is the cause of our slack conduct in our most important pursuits; and that we approach much nearer to nominal infidels than our proud hearts will acknowledge, when we do not attempt to enquire into what we avow; nay, I know not, but that we sink in the scale.

THE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL ON OUR CONDUCT THROUGH LIFE.

It has been advanced by superficial Christians, that our blessed Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount has a tendency to deaden exertion, and to put a stop to those active principles which give rise to every useful work, and serviceable discovery; that it destroys all spirit and energy, and forbids that care and foresight so necessary to the maintenance of a family: but such ideas of Christianity must be as false as they are dangerous. It is evident that God designed that his Son's

precepts, and the necessities, faculties, and nature of man should be attended most strictly to. How much then should we labour to reconcile them, by making the former correct the latter! CHRIST's doctrines, throughout, aim at the spirit which is in man, more than at his actions: for his conduct must be influenced by his situation, and circumstances in life.

A person seated daily before the most costly viands, may exercise a superior restraint upon his appetite, by adhering only to the wants of nature, and leaving the pampered taste ungratified. The same holds good with regard to attire: the dress must be conformed in some measure to the situation in life; but no extravagance, vanity, or undue solicitude and at-

tention, are to be bestowed upon the provision for it, which will preclude that waste of time, and thoughts, particularly in females, which interrupts the pursuit of more profitable objects.

The injunction of taking "no thought for the morrow," must mean, that we are to subdue that anxiety with respect to future events, which will impair our trust in GOD, or may prompt us to commit hard and unjust actions. And with regard to not opposing our enemies, in the ordinary intercourse with the world, such a proceeding is more likely to produce peace, than the most violent revenge and bitterness.

The example of meekness, if unaccompanied by falsehood, will strike the turbu-

lent, and probably to their advantage. But meekness may be retained even in reproving, and in asserting our just rights; and our wise SAVIOUR, Pattern, and Lawgiver, might find it particularly necessary to enforce a principle, but little attended to in his days, and so contradictory to the vindictive and rebellious spirit of fallen man. He, doubtless, knew that his advice in this point would never be regarded to his misery and destruction. The revenge, hatred, and malice now existing, but too fully justifies what is here adduced.

Our SAVIOUR'S doctrine is, in every particular, calculated to restore man to his primitive purity; the more it is uniformly adhered to, the nearer we shall be to heaven, and the more free we shall be

from those anxieties and distresses, which are produced by a worldly spirit. At the same time, our natural feelings, affections, remaining corruptions, and the example of our associates, together with that proper spirit of accommodation to the interests of others, which Christianity recommends, will all tend to secure the due attention to secular interest.

Just notions on this important subject, will preserve the equipoise between enthusiasm, no common excess in these days, and neglected Christianity, so fatally prevalent.

Obedience to the Laws of GOD, as enforced and explained by CHRIST, would render this life what we conceive to be

the state of Heaven, free from sin, and liable only to the sorrows arising from natural contingencies, but to none from those passions which disorder and distress the world so continually. If our SAVIOUR's precepts were universally put in practice, many of them in time would cease to be necessary. Aggression, resentment, and revenge would cease; self would be annihilated, and every one be more solicitous for the good of his neighbour than for his own. Property would be maintained by general consent, and no commotion, external or internal, public or private, would exist. The golden age would be most completely and safely realized: but until Christianity is universally acknowledged, and embraced in its

extensive sense, oppression will exist; the Bad must govern in this world, because they are not restrained, and the Good must often submit to injustice, because they dare not use the means, whereby alone the Bad are checked; it is the business of the former to conquer in themselves, that kind of spirit which intimidates and overawes the wicked man, and forces him to a degree of order, producing the effect of a higher motive. How much should we lament that submission increases oppression, were it not for a strong faith in the prospect of retribution!

HUMAN REASON UNAIDED BY RELIGION, MORE FALLIBLE THAN THE INSTINCT OF THE BRUTE-CREATION.

THE brute-creation, under the sole influence of instinct, is far less liable to error than man, when not guided by Religion: his reason is in more danger of perversion than the instinct of inferior animals; more operated upon by the force of external objects, and more governed by the passions: consequently, man, unaided by Divine grace, is of so vile a nature, and so dangerous to society, that the most ferocious of the brute-kind is

not more to be dreaded; because a wild-beast can be guarded against, and shunned; but a bad man, especially if in a high station, or with the reins of any kind of government in his hands, must by his example, mismanagement, inattention, and abused authority, tend to the ruin and mischief of those with whom he has dealings. Under this description must be included men of an amiable moral nature without religion; as their deficiency in principle may extend to others, who are not endued with the same natural dispositions.

If we compare the brute-creation with the human, we shall observe more undeviating order, more persevering industry in some of the simple operations of the

former (approaching nearer to the works of the sublime Artificer of all things) than in the laboured and capricious performances of the latter. To consider man in this light, is far from depreciating; it elevates him, by drawing his importance from GOD, and not from nature; by placing him in this world as a being, to serve his Creator in every action; to study the Divine will in the Scriptures, and to govern himself by the instructions therein given; to enjoy the glories and beauty of the Creation, as the work of GOD, and as a relaxation to his senses.

The faculties given to man, and only to man, plainly evince for what purpose he was designed, and to what end he is to employ them; namely, in properly ful-

filling his functions as a human being, to glorify GOD, here; and, through a blessed Mediation, to be immortal with Him, hereafter.

THE GOSPEL OUR ONLY UNERRING GUIDE.

To attempt to follow, unconvinced, the opinions of others, with respect to Religion, appears to me very dangerous; and may be liable to produce great unsoundness in our sentiments, and consequently a great inconsistency in our conduct. The Bible has been given us for our guide through this life to another: and if we earnestly pray for understanding, when we read it; if we impartially judge ourselves by its infallible truths; without doubt, we may receive light sufficient, to guide us under every circumstance of our

spiritual or temporal condition: it reaches every case, and situation; and, studied to ts full extent, will, unaided by precept, or even example, be capable of leading us to a blessed immortality.

Not that we should reject the inestimable privilege of good society, or forego the advantages of good advice; but let us pray for right conviction upon uncertain points, and doubtful cases; and not substitute the consciences of our fellow-creatures, for our own; or the advice of man, for that of GOD.

Few people know those circumstances of our situation and connections, which will enable them to give proper and judicious advice; and so much prejudice is mixed with our narrations, when self is

in question, that we can seldom arrive at the opinion that suits our case. The word of GOD will prove a sure and certain rule to us; and our blessed SAVIOUR's Sermon upon the Mount, if taken as a check upon any excess in our conduct, embraces every duty incumbent upon us in this life, and will, if adhered to, lead us to a better.

WARMTH OF DEVOTION MAY BE PROMOTED BY PRAYER AND PERSEVERANCE.

THE reluctance we often feel towards the service of GOD, must be a subject of great distress to those, who would wish to feel the contrary sensations; and must create an alarm, lest the mind, thus indisposed towards its most important concerns, should be in a dangerous state. But let us have recourse to prayer under such circumstances; though we may feel averse from addressing GOD, our faith, fear, and love will certainly increase; and we must consider that it is our trial to en-

deavour to fix our wavering thoughts from the various distractions which outward objects occasion. If Religion was always delightful to us, there would be no conflict, no effort to keep it prevalent in the heart, and this world would be an anticipation of Heaven. But GOD has otherwise ordained, and we must labour by prayer, serious company, books, and thoughts, to nourish every good impression, and never suffer ourselves to fall into an unprofitable train of thinking.—Cares have a tendency, as well as pleasures, to alienate the heart from GOD, but do not plunge it into so lethargic a state; and the transition is more natural from business, than from amusements, to Religion.

SOME ADVANTAGE MAY BE DERIVED FROM ALL SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

It is universally agreed by us in our serious moments, that the love and fear of God should be the prevailing sentiments of the heart; at the same time, our pursuits have usually a direct contrary tendency; and instead of endeavouring to counteract the mischievous effects of the circumstances of our situations, we criminally and tamely yield to them, and by our anticipations and retrospects concerning frivolous and useless subjects, we add hourly to the loss of our time, and the misapplication of our talents.

If our situation in life precludes us from serious conversation with our fellow-creatures, let us remember that communion with God by prayer, the study of the Holy Bible, and the cultivation of good impressions, are not interdicted; and if we make use, fairly and diligently, of the moments we have in our power, increasing them by an attention to early rising, there is no situation which does not offer the means of improvement in spiritual knowledge.

Our intercourse with people of little or no religion, may be attended with advantage to them, or to ourselves; and a constant and anxious desire either to derive, or to impart instruction, will render so-

ciety, otherwise irksome, profitable and interesting to us.

It certainly must be our duty to avoid whatever impairs the love of GOD in our hearts, or weakens the force of his law in our minds; and even our obedience to parents must not exceed the obedience we owe to our Heavenly FATHER: but let us be careful, that we do not mistake whim, taste, a retired disposition, and a selfish turn of mind, for the love of GOD, and of virtue; being assured, that unless some degree of seclusion from the dissipation of the world be attended by a far more useful distribution of time, in benefiting our fellow-creatures and ourselves, the opportunities we have neglected will in-

crease our guilt, instead of diminishing it; and we shall probably be called to an account, though not for having wasted, yet for not having improved, the talents committed to us, by our *just* as well as merciful GOD.

RELIGION THE SOURCE OF CHEERFULNESS AND TRANQUILLITY.

If Religion is represented as a gloomy pursuit, interdicting the relaxations and amusements of the mind, a very false view is both taken and given of the surest and most infallible source of peace and cheerfulness; keeping the heart of man, in proportion as it prevails, tranquil, without indolence, and active, without undue solicitude.

As to amusement, every thing seems allowable, that does not impair our love of God, or tempt us to disobey his com-

mandments, and those of his Blessed SON.

All the works of GOD cannot be too much admired, and enjoyed; the charms of virtuous society cannot be too much cultivated, if it interferes not with our duty.

Family-affection, in its various branches, may be indulged, and only limited by a higher regard. Our industry, if applied towards good and useful purposes, need only be restricted by superior services.

Having thus the power of relieving our minds, which cannot in this world be fixed upon their best objects, by pleasures, which restore the heart to GOD, when kept within due bounds, can we ever be esteemed dull and miserable? Are we not endea-

vouring to fulfil our destination on earth better, by preserving our minds more free to return to the service of our MAKER, than by allowing ourselves to partake of that kind of amusement which hardens the heart, and indisposes it to what is serious?

Let us be honest with ourselves, in fairly examining, in what manner, and to what degree, we are affected by worldly pleasures: whether they bring us nearer to, or alienate us from GOD: what share they have in our attention and thoughts. By this test we shall know, with what safety they may be enjoyed, and we can withdraw from them if they interfere with our duty to GOD.

What proves a harmless gratification to one person, may be a dangerous tempta-

tion to another: which conviction must render us very sparing of our judgment on the actions of our fellow-creatures, as we should always hope that the system of self-examination is not laid aside, nor the consideration of the traces and branches of sin neglected by many who share in worldly relaxation.

It has been frequently said, as a subject of wonder, that old people do not retire from this world, to prepare for another; and happy it is for them when they can; but to me it appears, that habits, acquaintance, and the decreasing power of employing themselves, together with (too often) a painful retrospect, render it likely that the advanced period of life will be wasted, as in the former part; unless the Christian Religion

lends its supporting aid, and beneficial effects, to banish remorse, present futurity to view, and open a fresh channel of comfort and support to the, otherwise, hopeless creature.

REDEMPTION NECESSARY TO OUR SALVATION.

THE knowledge of sin in ourselves, without a knowledge of a SAVIOUR, could not fail to produce the greatest wretchedness: therefore, how wisely, how kindly, is conducted the scheme of our Salvation, through the mediation of CHRIST!

The information of our abject state, and the remedy for it, are conveyed by the same means: what exhibits to us the full measure of our sin, supplies us with the atonement for it: and the perfect law of GOD given us by CHRIST, coming so far

short of obedience from our natural and even improved qualities, forces all in this world to confess, that GOD could not be faithful to his own word, if he procured us salvation without intercession.

All who profess themselves Christians, and who attend to what is required of them in CHRIST's law, will easily understand that the strict examination of their hearts necessarily leads to a conviction, that the best actions are sinful, and require mercy; and are so far from heavenly purity, as to demand no less a sacrifice than the blood of a *Saviour*.

If such is our state, if such are the terms of our salvation, how watchful should be the Good, how fearful should be the Bad! Where is our rest, where

our security? Can we do otherwise than watch? Can we too much study the Law by which we shall be judged?

CHRISTIANITY PROMOTES AN EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF HAPPINESS.

An adherence to the precepts of our blessed Saviour, would produce that equality so warmly sought after by those, who perhaps feel an honest zeal to redress the woes of their fellow-creatures, and to check oppression.

Let us consider, however, that the equality in question would not create a confusion of ranks in society; for a difference in situation must call forth various duties in the *ruler*, and the *ruled*; giving each an opportunity of acting his part pro-

perly; but it would produce an equality of happiness. The rich man would then consider himself as a steward to the poor, and would not fail to be his best protector. The luxuries, but not the comforts of life, would be lessened.

The Christian would be ashamed to partake of the good things of this world, unshared by his fellow-creatures in poverty; and to be inattentive to his wants and to the means of alleviating them. The Christian would know the exact bounds between justice and mercy, and what was his own duty and that of his brethren in their respective situations. His desire and endeavours to relieve their burthens, and, by his advice, to enable them to bear what could not be mitigated, would be produc-

tive of more content in the lower class of people, than an attempt to redress their grievances by a subversion of distinctions.

The rich man's condition would, it is true, be no easier than the poor man's; because, the self-restraint enjoined by Christianity, together with his constant mental labour properly to direct and assist the poor, must keep him in perpetual exercise, and would equal the toil of the mechanic or labourer: but when these efforts are rewarded by a conviction of bestowing happiness, both here and hereafter, who would exchange it for the apathy proceeding from dissipation, sloth, and sensual indulgences?

The poor man, under the influence of right principles, and seeing that the de-

sire of his superior tends to his real welfare, will be submissive, honest, and affectionate; and will be thankful that his Maker, in ordaining a difference of situation in society, has also provided a powerful mitigation of the evils attending it.

DISSIPATION AND SECLUSION EQUALLY INCONSISTENT WITH SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

SOLITUDE is as contrary to self-acquaintance, as an indiscriminate intercourse with the world; they both tend to lull and stupify the senses, and both flatter us that we have subdued, or do not possess, those tempers and passions, which a free and unreserved conversation with our fellow-creatures in their different relations to us, n the path of domestic duty, will exhibit to our consciences.

But we are too apt to allow no medium between total seclusion, and the tumultu-

ous pleasures of the world, which, far from raising, depress the animal spirits, and unfit them for the sober and rational enjoyment of home, near relations, and true friends, who are all slighted, and overlooked as objects of no value, as not contributing to gratify that high-seasoned and vitiated taste, which seeks for novelty but finds it not: in the ever-varying scenes, however, arising from a deep interest in home, children, servants, the poor, a moderate association with our immediate neighbourhood, who may be of service to us, though they should not be of a very serious cast, and in company whose sentiments are different from our own, our sincerity, self-denial, patience, forbearance, gentleness, zeal, re-

solution, love to GOD, and our neighbour, are alternately called forth, and kept in exercise. What we have gained, may be imparted in some measure, or at some period; and provided the great object of obedience to GOD is kept in sight, a little society cannot but be profitable.

These advantages are not to be derived from large circles, where the real sentiments are seldom known, much less considered; and where we assist in flattering and spoiling each other, by an artificial conduct, expressions of warmth, which should be reserved for the nearest and dearest friend, and an appearance of approbation, which, if felt, is in a wrong direction.

Melancholy is more the result of dissipation, and of a vacant unoccupied mind,

than the consequence of attention to religious subjects. An animated love towards, and belief in GOD, and CHRIST, producing every active duty, is accompanied by an attention to, and regulation of the thoughts, particularly calculated to preserve the cheerfulness of the heart.

I cannot but think that the source of true enjoyment has not been experienced by those, who seek for it out of the bosom of their own families; their relaxations, so far from being a proof of inward happiness, are tacit confessions of the contrary; even the mirth which sometimes exists in large parties, gives me the idea of a perturbed, and unnatural state of spirits. Society may be divided into four

classes; men of vice, of pleasure, of learning, and of religion; the two former, and the two latter, most usually assimilate.

ON THE PROBABLE EXTENDED BENEFITS OF REDEMPTION.

I CANNOT but believe that the virtuous but unenlightened savage, who sings the war-song, the only elevation he may be capable of, whilst he is tortured by his enemy, will find his salvation, through the mediation of CHRIST, though unconscious of its operation, as surely as his fellow-creatures who have had greater means of instruction ; and much more so than those who neglect their opportunities of improvement, and who level their souls, by obduracy, to the state of the uneducated

Negro, whose ignorance may be his excuse at the great tribunal, where those, who have not endeavoured to impart the glorious light of revealed religion, in ways most calculated for its promulgation, will be accountable for their neglect.

THE ABSENCE OF TRIAL AND TEMPTATION NOT TO BE MISTAKEN FOR THE CONQUEST OF SIN.

PERFECTION is thought to be attainable on earth, by some, whose circumstances shelter them from those temptations which may convince others, how far they are from a state, that does not require incessant prayer, and watchfulness, and an entire dependence upon GOD.

A Recluse may flatter himself that sin is subdued, when, in fact, it is only the opportunity of sinning that is absent.

Solitude may give us the means of judging ourselves; but our trials result from the duties we are engaged in, the calamities we undergo, the dispositions of those with whom we have dealings, and from our prosperity, which is generally our greatest foe.

A PETITION FOR RESIGNATION UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.

May discontent be for ever banished from my heart; and may thankfulness, with humility, so pervade my thoughts, that no calamities may ever give rise to a repining spirit! May I ever remember, that my situation is the one allotted me by the wise Disposer of events; that, as to my spiritual concerns, no company, no employment can be unprofitable, if the great end of my existence, and the glory of God is kept in view. Any troubles that fall to my share, are allowed by God; and

what is his will, should be precious to me, and thankfully received, though it may not be my own will. May nothing trouble me, but sin, and those temptations which lead to it! But on this latter point, may I be duly instructed, and not vainly imagine that a change of circumstances will be more favourable to my improvement; but be watchful to make the best use of every opportunity, and to turn all society into a means of profit; and, instead of fruitless lamentations, may I only be careful to turn every event to a good account, and to view it on the brightest side!

A PARAPHRASE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"OUR FATHER, which art in Heaven."—

How kind, how compassionate art thou, O GOD, to declare by thy blessed SON'S mouth, that Thou art the Father of the beings thou hast created! Can we then despair of thy protection, or of thy attention to us in the minutest circumstances of our existence? does not every thing we see in nature, confirm the belief of thy omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence? and can we think that such tenderness, and such justice, which are

evinced in thy slightest works, should predetermine men to everlasting punishment? This doctrine must surely have a mischievous tendency, must produce either presumption or despair, false and flattering security, or dark and comfortless despondency: Thou, who art our Father in heaven, hast assuredly given us sufficient light for our salvation, or wilt judge us by a deficiency in that light if we do not blind ourselves and say, "we cannot see." In a Christian country, how innumerable are our advantages, how powerful and unerring a guidance may thy most holy word prove to us, if we neither neglect nor corrupt, but pray to thee, that we may understand every part of it. How wisely contrived is every circumstance of our

existence! even thy chastisements evince thy mercy, and thou dost not afflict us beyond what thou enablest us to bear; although our weak and murmuring nature, our faithless and hard hearts are tardy to acknowledge it. But may that which seems insupportable, eventually bring us nearer to thee, and make us more earnest in seeking out and performing thy will! May we all depend, not on our own strength, but on that of our kind and merciful Father; remembering also, that He must be our powerful and just Judge.

"Hallowed be thy name."—

Grant us grace, O LORD, to venerate thy blessed Name upon every occasion, to hold it very sacred, and never to lose sight

of the holiness of it, by bringing it up lightly in common conversation, or by prayers offered to thee with the lips, in which the heart has no share. Let nothing that we injudiciously obtrude, or negligently keep back, expose thy precious Name to slight or ridicule; and let us never be ashamed of it, but glory in every opportunity of manifesting, that we desire, by thy assistance, to become truly thy servants, and sincere Christians; that we are ready to combat any difficulty that may impede us in our spiritual progress; and when once, with the help of prayer, we have made our determination, let neither shame, fear, nor irresolution, deter us from proceeding in the way of thy commandments! O God, grant that thy

SON's name may be united with thine, according to thy blessed will, and that we may hold it in equal adoration!

"Thy kingdom come."—

Let thy kingdom come, O merciful GOD, into the hearts of thy unworthy creatures; and grant that the dominion of sin, and of Satan, may yield in every instance to the influence of thy holy Law, and the direction of thy blessed Spirit; and that we may obey no other governor in preference to Thee, that we may banish every desire, and shrink from every situation, that is incompatible with thy service. Open our eyes, awaken our understanding, and soften our hearts, that we may observe, know, and love thy injunctions. Remove, O LORD, the preju-

dices which are inherent in us, and those in which we encourage each other against thy divine commands; and bless thy word, that it may prove more and more delightful to us; that we may know how willing Thou art to give grace to all, who with humility, sincerity, and earnestness, strive after thy kingdom, which thou canst, in some degree, bestow upon us here, as well as hereafter.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—

We wish, O GOD, to submit to thy most holy, and righteous will; we desire not to follow our own foolish and deceitful hearts, nor to mark out for ourselves the path in which we are to tread, as we can-

not know what will conduct us to Thee. A thorny and rough road is most likely to contribute to the sanctity of the soul; but as we should not have sufficient resolution and self-denial, voluntarily, to choose troubles as our portion, give us grace, at least, meekly to acquiesce in thy dispensations, however painful; which, if properly submitted to, are always lightened, either by some temporal mercy, or by the far more precious comfort of thy supporting grace. Thou, Almighty God, art entitled to the most implicit submission, and the most perfect obedience, from the creatures of thy hand; and in all our troubles give us strength to know from whom they come, and for what purpose they are sent. May we be ready to obey

our glorious Leader, our all-wise and kind Father, upon every occasion; and be content to suffer, by his appointment, rather than to obey our own wishes, and prosper in this life; knowing, that his justice and mercy will make us a way to escape.

"Give us this day our daily bread."—This petition seems to imply, that we are, from day to day, to implore a supply of temporal blessings, and yet to check all inordinate solicitude concerning them.—Thou, O merciful SAVIOUR, by allowing us thus to pray, evincest that a moderate concern for our provision will not be disapproved of by thee; although the expression bounds our necessities to the present day. Grant us, O LORD, thy grace, that,

in proportion to thy generosity to us, we may have hands and hearts open to alleviate the distresses of our fellow-creatures; that we may share our bread with those who are less affluent, and be at all times ready, and willing, to support and comfort them in body and soul!

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."—

Suffer us not to feel, much less to harbour, O GOD, any degree of resentment against those who offend us either involuntarily, or designedly; but give us strength to remember on what terms we hope to be forgiven at thy tribunal; and that we ourselves implore pardon from thee, on condition that we freely grant it

to others. Let us not dwell longer upon the faults of others, or the provocations we encounter, than is necessary to avoid falling into the like, and to preserve our notions of good and evil distinct: and give us grace never to mistake our own evil tempers and pride, for thy will, and a keen perception of thy law. In doubtful cases, when the path is not plain how far we should concede to others, let us always incline to thy blessed SON's precepts, which precede his holy prayer; and then we shall feel, that it is possible to "be angry, and sin not;" and if, from the corruption of human nature, we fall into resentment, may it be quickly checked, and directed against the *sin*, and not against the aggressor: sorrow will then prevail over

anger, and our mild rebukes will have more of love, than of hatred in them. Grant that we may bear every thing but what interferes with our duty to Thee; and when, by prayer, we can make that known to ourselves, we may walk on with humble confidence, and be sure that thou, O merciful Father, wilt make good thy own most precious promises, for the sake of thy Son JESUS CHRIST.

"And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."—

O gracious GOD, grant us thy restraining grace, that the intercourse we have with society, and the various situations we are thrown into, may not prove injurious to our spiritual interest, and become temp-

tations, beyond what we are able to struggle against. Arm us with thy strength, and let the experience of our weakness teach us, with a steady eye, to look up to thee, the only Rock of our Salvation. May we know that our strength is only in thee; and that we cannot of ourselves prevent either sin, or sorrow; that the direction of hearts is not in our own power, and that we are sure to go astray, when unconducted by thy powerful and mighty arm. May we never lose sight of this important truth, nor dare to trust ourselves upon any occasion: so shall our hearts and minds be safe, at all periods, and thy blessed will and commands more strong than any temptation. Every evil, which, from the corruption of our nature, we may be liable to,

in this precarious state of existence, be thou, O GOD, pleased to avert from us, or render us able to bear, without offence to thee. Let thy anger be more feared by us than any evil, proceeding merely from our abode in the flesh: nevertheless, be pleased to spare us from trouble, if thou seest proper, for thy blessed SON'S sake, JESUS CHRIST.

"For thine is the kingdom; the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

To thee, O GOD, all power must be ascribed; the kingdom of Heaven is at thy disposal, and from thee alone, and by thy grace, can we hope to obtain it. We are expressly informed, by thy holy word, that every thing within, and without us, has

a strong tendency to oppose thy kingdom, here, on earth; but still, thou hast graciously held out the strongest promises, and the most comfortable hopes, if we will but humbly and meekly receive them; not daring to walk by our own wisdom, which is foolishness, but trusting with faith to thy omnipotence, and giving thee that glory, which every work of thy creation pleads for, and which will be made still more manifest, by the souls of men redeemed, or rejected, by JESUS CHRIST.

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